

with the agreement to end their longstanding conflict in Peru and Ecuador. With your leadership, Mr. President, peace can come to Colombia, too.

As you embark on your mission to build an honorable and enduring peace, count on the United States as a friend and partner. Count on us, too, as you work to bring prosperity to all Colombians. We will work together to create jobs and improve opportunities for both our peoples. We already are your largest trading partner and foreign investor. But there is much more we can do together. And as part of the extraordinary process of integration now taking place all across our hemisphere, we will work together, and with our other friends throughout the Americas, to uphold human rights, root out corruption, fight crime, advance education and health care, overcome poverty, and protect our common environment. We will work together to combat illegal drugs. We have worked together, but we must do more. For both our peoples have suffered greatly from the drug trade and its brutality. The battle against drugs is a common battle. It must unite our people, not divide them.

Colombians deserve normal lives. They deserve to live free in their homes with their families, to enjoy the phenomenal richness of their culture, the vallenato music, the paintings and sculptures of Botero, the fantastic writings of Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Mr. President, we in the United States watched with pride as you took the oath of office in August, wearing the suit of clothes your father had worn when he was inaugurated President of Colombia 28 years ago. You said then, "This is not my day, but the day of all Colombians. Change begins today."

This is a new beginning for Colombia. It is also a new opportunity to strengthen the bonds between our peoples. So let us begin today. Again, Mr. President, welcome, and welcome back to the White House.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:50 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nohra, wife of President Pastrana. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Pastrana.

The President's News Conference With President Pastrana

October 28, 1998

President Clinton. Good afternoon. Let me say again how very pleased I am to have President Pastrana, his wife, his children, and so many members of his government here with us. This is truly a new beginning for Colombia and a new opportunity for our nations to renew our bonds. We made a very good start today.

Our hemisphere is increasingly working together for democracy and opportunity, for justice and human rights, for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. For Colombia, the insurgency looms over all other challenges today. There is terror and assassination, kidnapping, including the kidnapping of United States citizens, and other affronts to human rights. The narcotics trade and the civil conflict have fed off each other as rebels and paramilitaries do business with violent drug traffickers.

However, we know peace can come, even in the most difficult circumstances, if the will and the courage for peace is strong. President Pastrana has the will, the courage, and the support of his people to build peace. I welcome his efforts to open talks with insurgent groups. We stand ready to help. We hope the insurgents and paramilitaries will seize this opportunity the President has offered them by ending terrorism and hostage taking and involvement with drug traffickers.

The President and I have just signed a new alliance against drugs to intensify our joint efforts in education, in prevention and law enforcement, and extradition, eradication, economic development, and again, in efforts to end civil conflict. All are essential to this fight.

Also we have reached an agreement on using the proceeds from assets forfeited by drug traffickers to bolster Colombia's counternarcotics enforcement efforts. As I said this morning, the fight against drugs is our joint responsibility. It must unite us, not divide us.

In that spirit, I am pleased to announce that we will provide more than \$280 million in assistance to Colombia in the current fiscal year, not just for the frontline battle against

drugs today but for development, to build a better future. The strong package of aid recently approved by Congress shows that there is bipartisan support here in America for Colombia's new leadership.

I appreciate the challenge Colombia faces in getting its fiscal house in order. I also appreciate the commitment President Pastrana has made to meeting that challenge. If our experience is any guide, Colombia's effort will be rewarded.

Today we learned, after decades of deficits, that this past year we had a surplus of exactly \$70 billion. I'm very pleased that attempts to spend that surplus, rather than preserve it until we reform the Social Security system to meet the needs of the 21st century, were not successful in the last Congress. It is important that we maintain this position until we have saved Social Security. Hopefully, that will occur next year.

While we both work to improve our economies at home, we must do more together. The President and I have agreed to seek new ways to expand trade and to improve our financial stability. We will start consultations on a bilateral investment treaty and a trade and investment commission for the Andean region.

We will work together toward the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas. We agreed that developments must be carried out in ways that protect our natural environment and the public health. Toward that end, we have reached agreement for Colombia to become the 73d nation to join the GLOBE program for environmental education over the Internet.

We also reaffirmed our joint commitment to strengthening democracy, human rights, the rule of law. Our Agency for International Development has concluded an agreement to help the Colombian Government strengthen its judicial system to improve its ability to prosecute human rights abuses. And our Defense Department has established a working group with Colombia's Defense Ministry to improve military justice.

Finally, President Pastrana and I have asked Secretary of State Albright and Foreign Minister Fernandez to establish a joint consultative group to keep us in close contact and keep all this progress on track so that

we can realize our common aspirations for greater democracy, prosperity, and peace in the new century.

Again, Mr. President, we take your election and your early actions as a very hopeful and positive sign for the people of Colombia and the opening of a new and strong chapter in our joint history together. Thank you for coming. The floor is yours.

President Pastrana. First of all, I'd like to express my thanks to President Clinton and to Mrs. Clinton for the splendid welcome that Nohra and I have been given. And I'd like to say to everyone that I've met in Washington, members of both political parties, both on this trip as well as on my earlier trip, that I am extremely impressed by your good wishes and by your will to work with us as we overcome past problems and enter a new era.

On behalf of our people, I would like to express our thanks to the people of the United States, and personally, I'd like to state that although I've only been President for 3 months now, it would be very difficult I think for Nohra and I to be welcomed so warmly anywhere else. I came here with the hope of forging an alliance with President Clinton and the United States, and I will leave having established a true friendship with the President, and I hope with his Nation.

We have made progress in all the areas placed before us: the environment, education, aviation, and economic cooperation. During this state visit, President Clinton and I have signed a new and historic alliance against drug trafficking in order to combat the growth, trafficking, and demand for drugs, which is a major achievement which reaffirms this new era in relations between Colombia and the United States.

I referred to all these areas earlier as items we have before us but not between us. These are matters of common interest. We are united on this, and united there is much that we can achieve.

Finally, before answering your questions, allow me to say that my country and my compatriots feel deep respect for President Clinton and for his role as world leader. And as a rarity in history, he is one who forges world

peace. President Clinton is a friend of Colombia, and in this visit we have solidified our friendship.

Thank you very much.

President Clinton. Now, what we will do is take a few questions. We will alternate between American and Colombian journalists. And we'll begin with Mr. Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Wye River Agreement

Q. Mr. President, less than a week after the Mideast agreement, Prime Minister Netanyahu has come under pressure from hardliners and says that he won't begin the pullback from the West Bank until he gets approval from his Cabinet, and he has delayed a Cabinet meeting indefinitely. Are you concerned about delays, the return of mistrust? And what can the United States do to prevent this agreement from unraveling?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, let me say that I believe it's a good agreement. It required principled compromise by both parties and extraordinary efforts.

Secondly, as you can see from the criticism both Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat have gotten, it took some courage for them to reach this agreement. I told everybody that I discussed this with before they came here that, if Prime Minister Netanyahu reached an agreement here, he would face a great deal of bitter criticism at home.

I personally think he did a good job at the Wye negotiations, a remarkable job, being strong, aggressive in defense of Israel's interests. The way I read the present state of things is that at the present moment he knows there's a lot of opposition in the government and in his political base to this agreement, and he wants to be absolutely assured that the early steps will be taken on the other side. I believe that if we complete the security arrangements that were agreed to at Wye, that the Israeli Government will approve this and honor their commitment and we'll go forward.

So I would urge all the onlookers here, including all of us in the press and in public life, not to over-react to every little bump and turn in the road. There was a lot of mistrust built up in this relationship. It wasn't going to evaporate even in 9 days. And a lot

of the people who weren't there at Wye are going to be heard from in both camps now. I think the important thing is they all make commitments to do certain things on a certain timetable and no one should slip off of that. And it was pretty well synchronized so that there will be continual reaffirmations on both sides of the commitments made.

If we can just stay on that, I think we'll be fine. But all of this should only clarify to all the rest of us that they were both quite brave in doing what they did and that peace is a difficult business in the Middle East.

Colombian Domestic Peace Process

Q. President Clinton, how committed are you with bringing peace to Colombia? And will you personally take the lead in this effort?

President Clinton. Well, I would like to do anything that I can, but I think the President has taken the lead in a way that is, I think, innovative and very heartening to the rest of us. Again, I hope that those who have been involved in the turmoil in Colombia will take his offer in good faith.

From the point of view of the United States, I think we should be in a supporting role however we can be of help. One of the things that we would very much like is the United States citizens who have been kidnapped. If they are alive, we'd like them released. If they're not, we'd like them accounted for. That would help us a great deal.

But I personally have been struck with admiration for the way that President Pastrana has handled this so far. I don't know what else anybody could do, and I think that the path he is pursuing is the one most likely to bring results. If there is anything we can do to support that, of course, I would be happy to do so.

Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International].

1998 Elections/Free Press in Colombia

Q. Mr. President, what is your take on the internal elections? How do you think the Democrats will fare? And do you think the impeachment process will impact on the election itself?

And for President Pastrana, do you have freedom of the press in your country? I understand that you have threatened to shut down a radio station.

President Clinton. Do you want to go first?

President Pastrana. Yes, please.

President Clinton. Yes, you want to go to first—or, yes, you want me to go first? [Laughter]

President Pastrana. You go first. [Laughter]

President Clinton. Let me say, I think that these elections, first of all, are important. This is an important time for our country, and therefore this is a very important election. And I hope there will be a big turnout. As to how they will come out, it's very difficult to say. There are an unusually large number of apparently quite close elections, which could be quite good for the Democrats in a year when, by 150 years of history we're not supposed to do very well, especially since our side is being very badly outspent.

But I think that the important thing is that the choices are clear. We believe that none of the surplus should be touched until we save the Social Security program. The leadership of the Republican Party apparently disagrees with that. Mr. Kasich talked about it again yesterday. We believe that it's important to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights that lets medical decisions be made by doctors, not accountants, that guarantees people can see a specialist, that their medical records are private, that they go to the nearest emergency room. They disagree with that.

We believe that it is very important that now that we're going to have 100,000 new teachers that we build or modernize 5,000 schools so they'll have classrooms to teach in. They disagree with that. We think we ought to raise the minimum wage; they disagree with that. We think there ought to be tobacco legislation to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco, that there ought to be campaign finance reform. Even though some Republicans have supported that, their leadership disagrees with that.

So the choices in this election are very, very clear. And all of these issues, plus my continuing efforts to maintain financial stability, economic stability around the world,

and keep the economy going, make this a very important time. And the only thing I can say is that every American should care about this and should go out and vote, and I hope that every American will.

President Pastrana. Thank you very much for your question.

First, I'd like to say that I am a colleague of yours. I'm a journalist. And for that very reason, I am one of the great defenders of freedom of the press. I think your question refers to a fine or a sanction that was imposed by the earlier administration. That's another one of the legacies left us by the Samper administration. Two days before the end of the administration, the President fined a radio network in Colombia precisely because they violated the Colombian legal statute.

My administration now needs to wait for this radio network—according to—Colombian law establishes the process necessary to appeal this decision, and we as the Government have approximately one month to respond to whatever appeal the network makes.

I think in Colombia we need to recover the freedom of the press that was lost over the last 4 years in great measure. And I would just give you some examples. Families that were owners of newspapers for over 100 years in Colombia had to close them down. TV licenses that had complied with the law—as stated here in the United States, even our Nobel Prize winner, Garcia Marquez, has stated this—these things were taken away since these people were not friends of that administration.

I think we're now in a new era where we will recover freedom of the press in Colombia. That is my commitment. I insist, as your colleague as a journalist, as a lover of democracy, we will recover freedom of the press, which I think to a great extent was lost over the last few years in my country.

Colombian Domestic Peace Process

Q. President Clinton, does the U.S. believe in the guerrillas' will for peace?

President Clinton. I can't say that because I've never had any direct contact with them. All I can say is, I've had quite a lot of experience now with this over the last 6

years. We have worked to end a war in Bosnia. We have worked to end three decades of conflict in Northern Ireland. We have labored in the vineyards, as you know, of the complex Middle East peace process. And we have worked in many other areas—I and my partners here in our administration. And I have read a great deal about the turmoil in Colombia and its roots. All the parties share the same country. It cannot be good for a nation over the long run to endure the kind of fighting that Colombia has endured and to have it all mixed in with the narco traffickers. It can't be good for the children of the guerrillas. It can't be good for the areas where they operate. It can't be good for the quality of life.

So now you have a President who is clearly independent of destructive forces, clearly committed to bringing people together, clearly committed to giving all the children of Colombia a better future. All I can do is hope and pray that the offer he has given—he has reached his hand out to these people, and I can only hope that they will shake his hand and take his offer.

Mr. McQuillan [Larry McQuillan, Reuters].

1998 Election

Q. Mr. President, on the latest Republican campaign commercials, do you think it's fair for them to try to cast your personal life as a campaign issue? And do you think in broader terms, that it's fair that anyone should view next Tuesday's election as a referendum on you?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, I think the Republicans are free—in our country, they're free, and they should be free to make the election about whatever they want to make the election about. I hope the American people have seen in me over these last few weeks a real commitment to doing what I told them I would do from the beginning, to try to atone to them for what happened and to try to redouble my efforts to be a good President. And I hope they have sensed the inner changes that are going on and the manifestations and the efforts I've made to help the education of our children in the budget, to achieve peace in the Middle East talks.

But I believe that it's always best if the elections are about the American people and their families and their future. And that's why I believe that, with the choice so clear—we are for Social Security first; don't squander the surplus; we're for the Patients' Bill of Rights; doctors, not accountants, make decisions; we are for building those 5,000 schools so the teachers will have a place to teach and the kids will have a place to learn; we're for raising the minimum wage and for campaign finance reform and for legislation to protect our kids from tobacco. And they're against those things.

That's one of the reasons they have the enormous financial advantage they enjoy which is paying for a lot of those ads. And so to me, there's a clear choice. How can I object to them exercising their free speech rights in saying what they think the election is about? They also say, I might add, apparently—I know what I've read, I've not seen these ads—they also say that the elections are about tax cuts and their plan on Social Security, which indicates to me that once again they are not committed to leaving this surplus alone until we reform Social Security. That, to me, is a very serious issue that will affect all the American people.

So I would hope that the American people will hear the differences between the two parties, see how far we've come in the last 6 years, and make their judgments. But in any case, I hope we'll have a big turnout. This is not an ordinary election because of the challenges facing our country, and we don't need an ordinary midterm turnout. We need people to show up. And I trust the American people. That's why we're still around here after over 200 years. I think they'll get it right.

Q. So, sir, does that mean——

President Clinton. I gave you my answer. The Republicans are free to say whatever they want to say. I told you what I believe the issues are that are most important facing the American people. I told you that I'm doing my best to be a good President and to evidence the commitment that I expressed to the American people over the last 2 months in what I do as President and how I do it.

But they have to decide whether to vote and on what to vote. I believe if the election is carried out on the issues affecting our children and our future, whether it's our financial stability or saving Social Security or the Patients' Bill of Rights or education, that the members of my party will do quite well, notwithstanding the enormous burden of history and the enormous financial disadvantage under which they labor. And so we're just going to go out there and keep reaching out to the American people and see what happens.

Colombia's Economic and Political Situation

Q. I'd like to know why you have been going down in the polls, and do you believe in those polls?

President Pastrana. I don't think life is about doing well in the polls or not. In our country we received a situation that all Colombians are very aware of, especially with regard to financial matters, where we have the highest fiscal deficit in Colombia's history. We were given a country with the highest rate of unemployment the country has had in the last few years. And clearly, I think that to a great extent this is due to the policies we've had to adopt and the policies we will continue to have to adopt to overcome the crisis.

What I've always repeated is that, as a leader, as a politician, a person has to be judged at the end of his or her term. Clearly, at least in my personal case, in spite of believing in polls, I think that logically we have to look at the mechanism; we have to see if we've talking about phone polls, personal polls, what kind of methodology has been used. But clearly, I think the important thing is that in 4 years we will know if these measures we've adopted were right or not.

We are committed to a peace process which is difficult, but we are committed to it, and we will forge ahead. We know the country we've received is in a financial situation worse than any in Colombia's history. We know we have to take harsh measures, and we will take them. We will protect the poorest sectors. Clearly, there are instructions to be given to ministers for all the social areas, those that have to do with social invest-

ment, with poverty, with health, and education, with building houses and—matters of social interest are matters within the budget on which we are not going to try to reduce our expenses but try to keep them up and strengthen them. And we will have to make a major effort from the viewpoint of the administration, as we are doing, to cut our expenses, to cut a number of things.

And logically, within 4 years we will know if these measures we are taking today with the assistance I've asked President Clinton for from the United States, through their support at the World Bank and at the Inter-American Development Bank and at the International Monetary Fund, with the help that President Clinton's leadership can provide us in Europe, in Japan, so that we can overcome this crisis and obtain the resources necessary to again generate confidence in Colombia, and thus, as we see today, we will be able to overcome the kind of exchange pressure we're under.

If we manage to generate that trust again—you heard that yesterday from the Secretary of the Treasury; today you've heard it from the President of the United States—with their help we will generate trust in the markets. We will take away the pressure on the exchange rate. We will lower our interest rates, and we will reactivate our economy. And thus we will increase our employment. And at the end of my 4-year term, we will be able to say, although we had to take some tough measures, we know now that those were the right measures to lead Colombia forward.

President Clinton. I would like to make just a comment about that, because I am a totally disinterested observer in this sense. But the President has been in office 3 months, and I have now been here 6 years. For whatever it's worth, I think he's making the right decision. If you come into office and you face a difficult challenge—and keep in mind, he now faces two difficult challenges; he has a big economic challenge and he has the challenge of peace—it's always better to be high in the polls than low—we all run for office—everyone would rather be loved than hated. Everyone would rather be liked than disliked. But when you have a difficult economic situation, it's better to bite

the bullet early and take the tough positions early so that people can get better. If you keep putting it off, the polls will slowly erode anyway, and in the end the people's lives won't change.

When we adopted our budget here in 1993, a lot of members of my party actually lost their seats because of it, and I've regretted it ever since for them. But when we celebrated the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, we invited all the ones who lost their seats to come back, and many did. And you'd be amazed how many told me that they did the right thing. They were proud of the fact that they got rid of the deficit of the country, and they gave us a new economy, a new lease on life.

This is the nature of things in the world today. Not all problems are easy. We'd all like it in life if everything we had to do was easy. But not everything we have to do is easy. And I think the President is doing the right thing. As a disinterested observer, I'll be very surprised if Colombia is not richly rewarded by much stronger economic success, more jobs, higher incomes, more success as a result of the decisions he is making today.

1998 Election

Q. Mr. President, you said a moment ago that Republicans have a right to frame their ads in this election as they see fit. Two ways they've framed these latest ads—number one, they argue in essence that you are not trustworthy, and therefore, you need a Republican Congress to balance against your Presidency. And number two, they ask the question, what do you tell your kids about your relationship with Ms. Lewinsky. I wonder how you would answer those two questions, sir.

President Clinton. Well, first of all, I have answered the second question as far as I should. The decisions beyond that on the publicity were made by others, not me. I have answered that question. On whether I've been trustworthy, I think you can look at the record. Go back and look at what I said I would do in 1992, when I ran for President.

Yesterday, I signed a bill, for example, which completed the agenda that I said I

would try to achieve for poor people in America to give them a chance to get more jobs and to allow them to save more of their own money when they're moving off welfare. It was a very important bill. It also contained our increase in Head Start funds, another commitment I made. And Gene Sperling came in, and he handed me this statement we put out in September of '93. And everything I said I would do on that list has now been done.

A noted Presidential scholar said a couple of years ago before we had the success of the last 2 years that I had kept a higher percentage of my promises than the last five Presidents, in spite of the fact that I had made more detailed commitments to the American people when I ran.

And the consequences are good. We have an economic boom. We have declining social problems. We are a force for peace in the world. So I think that it's fair for a person to be judged on his whole record. I've never—I'm not trying to sugarcoat the fact that I made a mistake and that I didn't want anybody to know about it. I think I've talked about that. The American people have had quite a decent amount of exposure to that. I hope very much that they have seen that I'm doing my best to atone for it. I hope they can sense the rededication and the intensified efforts I'm making for the cause of peace around the world, for the cause of prosperity at home.

But if you look at what I said I'd do when I presented myself to the American people in 1991 and 1992, at the long list of things we've done we said we'd do, and at the good results that the American people have enjoyed—and it's a fact that the American people, I think, agree with us and not them. I think that's the real issue here. Are we right or are they right? Should we save the surplus until we save Social Security? Should we pass a Patients' Bill of Rights, or not? Should we build classrooms for these teachers to teach in and classes so the kids can have smaller classes? Should we raise the minimum wage? Should we pass campaign finance reform? Should we protect our kids from the dangers of tobacco, or not? It's a clear choice. That will be the impact on people's lives in this election. That's what I believe.

But everyone else—that's why you have a vibrant democracy—everybody else gets to say whatever they want to say and debate it however they want to debate it. I can only tell you that I hope the American people will remember that, notwithstanding the best efforts of some to always take politics away from them and take decisions away from them and pretend that what happens to them and their lives is not important, it really is. And folks should show up and vote. And they should know that the decision not to vote is also a decision that will affect their lives.

That's all I can say. And I hope that many will go, and I trust them to make whatever decision is best for them and for our country.

Colombian Demilitarized Area

Q. Mr. President, a question on the demilitarization and the reservations in the United States with regard to those measures. President Clinton said that it would be good to face these subjects at the beginning. Did you talk about demilitarization in your meeting?

And I'd like to ask President Clinton what he thinks after his discussion with you this morning, what he thinks of that measure.

President Pastrana. I think that it's very important to be able to establish a dialog, a direct dialog with President Clinton, with the Secretary of State, with General McCaffrey, with the National Security Council Adviser, especially with this whole demilitarized area, which according to Colombian law can be established so that the representatives of the guerrilla movement can come to that area so we can guarantee their life so that the representatives of Government can go to that area and their lives will also be guaranteed. We can have international observers present in this demilitarized area, as well as journalists who will also be attending.

We had the opportunity today to explain to the President and to his Cabinet that this area will be established for 90 days. That was the commitment; that was the agreement. What we seek are 90 days after next November 7th. During that time we want the FARC to sit down at the negotiating table. They've already appointed three representatives. The Colombian administration will be naming a

representative. We'll establish an agenda for those meetings.

But I think it's been very important to be able to share these ideas with President Clinton so that the U.S. Government can discuss it with us to allay their concerns. As I was saying to him this morning, sometimes there may be misinformation or lack of information with regard to this subject. But clearly we have had the opportunity to be able to share and discuss with him exactly what that demilitarized area is about, not just with the President but also with—we've had our Minister of Defense, our High Commissioner for Peace, all the members of our delegation to be able to answer any concern, allay any fear, any question they may have with regard to this process. And I think it's been very well expressed.

But I'd like to see if the President has any additional comment to make on it.

President Clinton. I agree. [Laughter]
Go ahead, Wolf [Wolf Blitzer, CNN].

1998 Elections

Q. Mr. President, the other theme that these new Republican ads say is this—I hate to beat a dead horse, but I'll just give you an opportunity to respond to it—they say the question of this election is this: Reward Bill Clinton or vote Republican. Larry asked you earlier if you think these elections are going to be a referendum on your behavior. Do you think they will be?

President Clinton. Well, I think they're running a great number of ads with a lot of issues. I'd like to go back—I'm not sure I answered your question exactly right. I was talking about—on the first question you asked, I think what people ought to say to their children is that when someone makes a mistake, they should admit it and try to rectify it and that this is an illustration of the fact that those rules should apply to everyone but that when people do that, if they do it properly, they can be stronger in their personal lives and their family lives and in their work lives.

And many of us in life can cite examples where if we went through a period of assessing, that we grew stronger from it, and we actually did better. With a humble spirit, with

the grace of God and with a lot of determination, I think that happens. And I think in that sense, the lesson is a good one, that it should apply to everyone, from the President on down.

But I believe, to go back to your point, since there has been a lot of talk about misleading—they have a right to say whatever they want to say, but in fairness, they're basically saying to the American people, "We want you to give up saving Social Security first. We want you to give up a Patients' Bill of Rights. We want you to give up modernizing or building 5,000 schools. We want you to give up a minimum wage increase. We want you to give up protecting your children from the dangers of tobacco, and we want you to give up campaign finance reform. We want you to give up all of that. We don't want you to think about yourself. We want you to, in effect, ratify the decisions we made for the tobacco companies, the health insurance companies, the special interest that didn't want campaign finance reform—all the people that gave us the money to put this ad on the air—we want you to give up everything that could help you. And if we can distract you and divert your attention, that will enable us to hold on to our jobs, even though we had 8 months of partisanship in the last Congress and didn't do much until we had to get a budget out. And then we agreed to go along with the President and the Democrats and let them do what they wanted to do for education."

So I would say it wouldn't be a very persuasive argument to me if I were a citizen out there, because I would always be trying to think, as a citizen, what is best for my family, for my children, for my community and for my country. And I think that is always—always—got to be uppermost in all of our minds. I think it would be a more compelling debate if they would put whatever is they want to do and explain why they were opposed to what we wanted to do here, and have a debate so people could evaluate how it affects their lives.

But again, it's not for me to tell them how to do it. All I can tell you is what we're for and what we think the issues are.

Colombian Domestic Peace Process/ Immigration

[The following question was asked in Spanish, and the interpreter was unable to hear the question. Near the end of the question, the following interpretation was given.]

Q. Just like you had Arafat in the United States, here in the White House, do you think at some point it would be possible to have one of our guerrilla leaders here?

President Clinton. Sorry, the interpreter did not hear, so could he repeat his question? If he could repeat his question in English, then you could answer in Spanish and the interpreter could hear you. *[Laughter]*

President Pastrana. Well, Colombia is not at war. Colombia has an internal conflict. I've been able to describe it to the President. For 36 years we've had an internal conflict in the country. And what we hope for is precisely to be able to achieve a peace process that will allow us to put an end to the violence that Colombia has lived through in the last few years.

As I was able to explain to the President and to the press, for the first time as well, we have an historic opportunity. The guerrillas have agreed to eradicate illicit crops. For the first time the FARC has made a commitment—in fact, they have set that forth in the document they've given to the government, which the public knows of—for the first time they're willing to work on eradicating illicit crops.

So I think it's an historic opportunity for the country. If we're able to make peace in Colombia, this is the first major battle in which we will defeat the narco traffickers. The major enemy in Colombia is drug trafficking, drug traffickers. Therefore, we understand, and we know that we will win that battle. And by winning that battle, we will begin to do away with the global problems the entire world is suffering from today.

That's why I think it's a situation in which our country knows, we're already dealing with it. We've initiated our dialog with the ELN. And we hope after November 7th to begin the dialog with the FARC. And in this way we'll put an end to this process and, clearly, achieve the great wish of our people, which is to have a country at peace.

President Clinton. On the question you asked me about the immigration, the Colombians who are here, I don't know enough about the facts to answer the question. We did make—I tried to make good decisions regarding the Nicaraguans, the Salvadorans, and the Haitians. We have tried to be sensitive to the real facts of the individual's lives who are here—what were the circumstances under which they came to our country and under which they stayed—consistent with our other immigration laws, which are pretty open and broad, I think. But I would—before I could give you an answer, I would have to know more than I do now.

Thank you.

President Pastrana. Thank you.

President Clinton. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 165th news conference began at 3:20 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Pastrana's wife, Nohra; Foreign Minister Guillermo Fernandez of Colombia; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. President Pastrana referred to the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). President Pastrana spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Communique With President Pastrana of Colombia

October 28, 1998

In their second meeting since President Pastrana's election last June, President Clinton and President Pastrana consolidated a comprehensive partnership between their two governments designed to promote democracy and economic growth, fight illicit drugs, strengthen respect for human rights, extend the rule of law, and help bring an end to Colombia's armed conflict. Toward these ends, President Clinton pledged over \$280 million in new assistance to Colombia, to be made available in the course of the current fiscal year. President Clinton noted that the scope of this assistance, which is more than double that of last year, makes it by far the largest American assistance program for the hemisphere. This assistance is indicative of the strong bipartisan support,

in the Congress as well as his Administration, for Colombia and its new leadership.

The two Presidents agreed on the importance of increased trade and investment in sustaining growth, reducing poverty, and permitting societies to meet the aspirations of their people. They expressed support for the establishment of a Free Trade Area of the Americas by 2005, while also noting the continuing importance of the Andean Trade Preferences in promoting economic growth throughout that region, and underpinning the viability of alternative development programs. They initiated consultations on a Bilateral Investment Treaty, and agreed to conclude with the other countries concerned the creation of a Trade and Investment Council for the Andean region. They welcomed the expanded activities of the Export Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation in support of United States/Colombian trade and investment. President Clinton offered and President Pastrana accepted a program of technical assistance by the United States Treasury, with funding from United States Agency for International Development, for the financial sector. The Presidents agreed to work to create the fair and equitable conditions necessary to implement an Open Skies regime, and to conclude a new bilateral aviation agreement as soon as possible. President Pastrana welcomed the forthcoming visit of United States Commerce Secretary Daley to further expand cooperation in the fields of trade and investment.

The two Presidents signed an *Alliance Against Drugs* committing their nations to use all means at their disposal to stem narcotics production, trafficking, consumption and related crimes. They agreed that education, prevention, law enforcement, judicial action, extradition of narcotraffickers, aerial and other forms of eradication, alternative development and efforts to end armed conflict are all essential elements in an overall strategy to combat illegal drugs. They looked forward to the early completion of a customs mutual assistance agreement. They called for greater international efforts, and welcomed the work underway through the Organization of American States to forge a hemispheric alliance, and to establish a multilateral process to